

Samadhi - Patanjali Yoga Sutras

Yoga Articles General

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We are at crossroads

Mind is the instrument that connects to our sensory organs. Through sensory organs we perceive things but we cannot not assimilate thoughts deep within us as our mind is continuously chattering. Patanjali in his yoga sutras suggests that we need to get back to our inner being by engaging ourselves in Yoga, Pranayama, Meditation and Satsang. This way we will silence our mind to its core.

It is the nature of fire to burn. In the same way, mind has the natural quality to go outside. But it also has the ability to turn inside. Patanjali terms the mind turned outside as 'Vrutti'. 'Vrutti' has same root from Sanskrit as Vruttam that is a circle. Whenever an individual is in a circle he practices and participates in all activities within the circle. But then he should have the ability to draw himself inwards to the center. For example, a man has to switch from different vruttis or roles like the role of a son, a father, a worker, or a boss. So he should have the ability to withdraw himself completely to the center so that he can justify each and every role. He can study this justification only if he is witnessing everything for himself. 'To witness' in English means you are not involved but you see the action. The witness or Sakshi in Sanskrit indicates you are the doer and you are also the observer or become the Bramhan – the supreme consciousness.

The circle's center is just a point without any dimension but if the center does not exist the circle will also cease to exist. The circumference of the circle can be liked to activity or state of doing while center is the state of being. Yoga is the journey from the state of doing to the state of being.

The term Nirvana in Buddhism; Nirvikalpa in Vedanta; Samadhi or Kaivalya in Patanjali yoga sutras are one and the same thing called by different names. Basically it is about getting immersed in the universal consciousness. We must be like the soap bubble flying in air, the inside and outside being the same, but separated by small film, reflecting and refracting the sunlight and giving happiness to the viewers and then finally popping out. When we are pure in our thoughts, engaged in activities (vrutti) without attachment, we are like the soap bubble, we act outside, but don't let it settle inside. In that state, we have no attachment everything seems to be lightweight. That is true happiness – a true Samadhi.

Samadhi is not mysterious.

We experience Samadhi in day-to-day life while listening to a good music, watching a nice movie, going to beautiful landscapes and getting absorbed in doing so; this is Samadhi. Having a good night's sleep is also Samadhi. Upanishads say that if we never experienced Samadhi we wouldn't have survived.

If we consciously practice this state of samadhi we will be established in it. But as soon as a question arises as to 'what am I doing here', we come out of this state. The more we are in the state of samadhi, the less we will be multi-focused. When we put our mind to an object single pointedly, it is called dharana. In that state unconsciously we are also putting some effort. Slowly we need to recognize that effort and smoothen it, which then becomes a travel from dharana (fix) to dhayana (effortless flow). Effort is our ego and when this ego form of effort is dissolved samadhi happens. Such a person who has consciously reached above the normal realms of consciousness is said to be a Yogi. He approaches the world, interacts with it and once it is over he comes back to Samadhi. He hovers only around dharana, dhayana and samadhi. When we are not practicing samadhi, we wander around the object and hence we are interacting at the surface while yogi is below the surface, deep inside. Both are working

and interacting, but yogi does and thinks about only one task. When the three faculties - attention, meditation, and contemplation - are exercised fully, that is a perfect meditation known as Samyama – seeing beyond the objective world, when ordinary person perceives the objective details a samyami is the one who sees things beyond the object. While everyone was seeing apple falling down, Newton saw what is the force behind that makes apple fall down. Newton was a yogi. We find Upanishads quoting that ‘yogi sees beyond what a normal person sees’.

Sankhya

Patanjali terms the state of quiet mind as samadhi. To understand samadhi, we have to learn Sankhya, the intellectual counterpart of yoga. Sankhya and yoga are supposed to be a pair of dharshanas among six Darshanas, the Indian schools of thought. As per Sankhya, the intelligence comes first and then, from it, the object. Before the flower is born flower-ness exists. The flower comes from flower-ness, man-ness begets man, and so on. The seed of intelligence is responsible for proliferation and multiplication of creatures. The seed of thought, the seed of humankind is the source of everything. A person with Samyama sees flower-ness, not just the flower. Developing this samyama, one moves into higher realms of spirituality. Patanjali, in Vibhuti Pada explains that a person who meditates on the moon understands the whole celestial object.

Samadhi and its Levels

Samprajnata Samadhi: There are many layers of mind that can be quieted, hence leading to different levels of samadhi. First level of samadhi is where you are peaceful, quiet, in meditation but you are available to the outside world. This does not mean that you are agitated other times. In this state, you are sitting quietly, consciously getting rid of disturbances of your mind and meditating. You are not suppressing anything, which otherwise may lead you to agitation later. But if some stimulus happens, use your pragjna (knowledge) to respond; that is the Samprajnata Samadhi.

Asamprajnata Samadhi: Second level is when you go deeper into yourself, away from the world outside and if some stimulus happens, it won't affect you. This is Asampragyat Samadhi. We do get into such states in our real life, for example, if you are reading a book and someone walks by, you remain uninterrupted. A person can perform better in the outside world if he gets totally involved in the activity. In Mahabharata, Arjuna is supposed to have practiced his archery with such a concentration and hence, he is known to have hit the object with his arrow even in the middle of night.

Savitarka and Nirvitarka Samadhi:

Yoga means removal of the disturbances of the mind – yogah chitta vrutti nirodah

- Mind gets stimulus in different ways:
- Pramana – direct knowledge
- Vipariya - comprehension or inference
- Vikalpa - imagination
- Nidra - sleep
- Smriti - memory

The disturbance of the mind can come from any of the above cognitive stimulus. Whenever we come across any such stimulus our mind starts dialoguing, that is called tarka. It has its utility, but then one should realize whether tarka is necessary or not. Meaningless and unnecessary dialog is called kutarka. Intelligent and meaningful dialoging and analyzing within oneself is called vitarka. Vitarka is a tarka that elevates us. When we reach the state of Savitarka Samadhi, we have established ourselves where in a quiet mind. But we also weigh things with awareness and decide whether they are useful to discuss or not. That means we are in a state of vitarka.

As we go up the ladder, we have Nirvitarka Samadhi where we have greater control over mind, ideas, intellect and dialogues.

Savichara and Nirvichara Samadhi:

Savichara Samadhi is a state of silence in which thinking is available, but mind is quiet. Since there is a seed it will bring thoughts (vicharas). There are saints, sages who are really deep into meditation and would have experienced extraordinary feats. But they are still in the Sambeeja Samadhi that means there is still no freedom for them. Since the silence is at the level of prajna loka – the consciousness-state, they are likely to come out of samadhi in the event of disturbances in life. When we operate at a gross level, we are usually logical, argumentative and fighting with our thoughts. As we move into Samadhi states, we start transcending these thought states, but upto Sambeeja Samadhi, the seed still exists, it can sprout and finally grow into a tree. Rebirth of the person in the state of Sambeeja Samadhi is sure to happen. But as one reaches Nirbeeja Samadhi, no proliferation happens.

Ramakrishnan, Raman Mahrishi and Swami Vivekananda had experienced the state of Nirvikalpa and reached to Nirbeeja Samadhi. Such a person becomes one with the nature and with the divinity. Usually we are a part of Prakriti, the nature but only after reaching Nirbeeja Samadhi, we realize our Swaroopa, the ultimate self that we already are.

Ashtanga Yoga

We are so much caught up of the world outside that we have no power to quiet our own mind. Patanjali suggest us to do sadhana by withdrawing from the world outside. He suggests that this can be done by following 8 steps: Yama, niyama , asana , pranayama, pratyahara, dharna, dhyaana & samadhi. These eight steps help us slowly withdraw from outside world. Yama is a simple discipline for ourselves. Another technique he gives is - Abhyaasa and Vairagya. Abhyasa is the discipline that you practice. It is not forced from outside, but comes from within. When discipline is enforced from outside we wait for a chance to come out of it. For example, plucking the raw fruit from a tree is hard and it disturbs the tree. But when the fruit becomes ripe, then even a simple touch brings it to our hand and it has a sweet taste. This can happen only when we are established in the truth. Truth is not what something to look for. You establish yourself in the truth.

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